

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 060936Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 714
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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UNCLAS TUNIS 6612

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BTRA, TS

SUBJ: STATE OF TENNESSEE MIDDLE EAST TRADE MISSION

1. TENNESSEE TRADE MISSION LEFT TUNIS ON SCHEDULE NOV 5 AFTER NUMBER OF MEETINGS DURING TWO WORKING-DAY VISIT. MISSION MEMBERS MET WITH: CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR GHENIMA; PRESIDENT BEN HADJ AMMAR OF UNION OF INDUSTRY COMMERCE AND HANDICRAFTS (UTICA); API HEAD CHELLY; DIRECTOR OF PLANNING GHANNOUCHI OF MINISTRY OF PLAN; SEVERAL LOCAL BUSINESS EXECUTIVES, AND EMBASSY ECON COUNSELOR FOR COCKTAIL/ BRIEFING. LUNCH FOR MISSION HOSTED BY TUNISIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK (BDET) AND RECEPTION BY UTICA COMPLETED PROGRAM.

2. POSTS SCHEDULED FOR VISITS BY MISSION SHOULD BE AWARE THAT, DESPITE PREVIOUS INDICATIONS THAT SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FROM EMBASSY WOULD NOT BE REQUIRED, IN FACT EMBASSY WAS CALLED UPON AT LAST MINUTE TO HELP ESTABLISH MEANINGFUL BUSINESS CONTACTS. INVESTMENT PROMOTION AGENCY (API) HAD ORIGINALLY ORGANIZED FULL SCHEDULE OF APPOINTMENT WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS BUSINESS CLIMATE AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES. MUCH OF PROGRAM WAS CANCELED
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BY API BEFORE ARRIVAL OF MISSION WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT

THAT MEMBERS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN EXPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES RATHER THAN DIRECT INVESTMENT. LATE ON FIRST DAY OF VISIT, MISSION CANCELED SCHEDULED FIELD TRIP TO BIZERTE ON SECOND DAY OF VISIT AND APPROACHED EMBASSY FOR ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING LAST MINUTE APPOINTMENTS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSMEN. WHILE SEVERAL APPOINTMENTS MADE ON SHORT NOTICE, LOCAL TORRENTIAL RAINS SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED TELEPHONE SERVICE AND TRANSPORTATION AND LIMITED OUR SUCCESS IN FULLY RESPONDING TO THESE REQUESTS. ANOTHER HANDICAP WAS THAT MISSION DID NOT REALIZE THAT FEW LOCAL BUSINESSMEN SPEAK ENGLISH, WHILE API HAD NOT ANTICIPATED THAT MISSION WOULD SEEK INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENTS, THEREBY REQUIRING SEVERAL INTERPRETERS. EMBASSY PERSONNEL WERE ABLE TO ASSIST ON SOME MEETINGS.

3. COMMENT: HARD TO DETERMINE WHETHER MISSION CAN BE CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL. WHILE SOME BUSINESS CONTACTS WERE MADE, LACK OF ADVANCE PREPARATIONS SERIOUSLY HAMPERED MISSION VISIT AS A WHOLE. SOME TUNISIANS NOTED TO EMBASSY THAT SOME MEMBERS OF MISSION REPRESENTED FIRMS ABOUT SAME SIZE AND SAME LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION AS THEIR OWN FIRMS. OTHER TUNISIAN FIRMS SEEMED TO FEEL THAT CONTACTS HAD BROUGHT INFORMATION ON USEFUL US TECHNOLOGY, EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES TO THEIR ATTENTION WHICH THEY MIGHT WISH TO ACQUIRE IN FUTURE.
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